A crowd gathered in front of the Women's College, where the Executive Committee of the Soviet was in session, and demanded that it lead the procession to the prisons to liberate the political prisoners—an idea inspired by recollections of the storming of the Bastille in the French Revolution. But the Committee hesitated, fearing that the demonstration would end in bloodshed. Unable to dissuade the crowd, it appointed three men to head it. The trio, which included Trotsky, led the procession toward quiet streets far from the prisons and, after endless marching, dismissed the crowd with a warning not to fall into the trap of *provocateurs*.

In the evening, the Soviet convened in a schoolroom of the Women's College. This time some 250 deputies from 111 plants were present. Reports from the precincts were brief: Inspired by success, workers were ready to fight to a complete victory! The question was how to transform this enthusiasm into revolutionary action. The only weapon at the workers' disposal was the strike, and the Soviet was not certain how to use it. After long deliberation, it decided to continue the strike, which amounted to rejection of the Manifesto. The resolution, proposed by the Executive Committee and accepted unanimously without discussion, declared that the workers would not lay down their arms until a democratic republic, the first step toward socialism, was established. It ended with a pledge: "The strike will continue until circumstances call for a change in tactics." It was understood that the change could come in one of two ways—by resumption of work if the demands of the strikers were met, or by armed revolt if they were not.

AFTER THE MANIFESTO

The Soviet was at the zenith of its glory. The public credited it and the revolutionary parties with having organized and directed the strike that crushed the despotic regime.

The Soviet's meeting on October 19 opened with reports from the precincts. The workers were ready to strike until a democratic republic was established, Trepov removed, the Constituent Assembly convened, and hell froze. But the reports from other cities showed that the all-Russian general strike was losing strength. It was hard for the Soviet to call the workers back in view of the resolution it had passed only the day before. It therefore tried to explain the retreat by the argument that "the victorious workers must arm themselves for the final struggle for the democratically elected Constituent Assembly." The reference to arms slipped into the resolution in the same way as the call to an armed demonstration had slipped from